

MODULE

2

Agenda Setting and Problem Definition

"According to a public policy poll, most Americans find lice and colonoscopies more appealing than Capitol Hill."

-Ron Fournier

Introduction

This module aims to introduce students to the first two steps of EnACT's policy cycle: Problem Definition and Agenda Setting. Through this, students will understand what inherency is and learn how to bypass political gridlock and break the status quo. In addition, students will learn the differences between saliency and intensity and apply it to real-life situations.

Objectives

1. Students will understand why problem definition is a crucial part of the policy cycle process.
2. Students will be able to have an understanding of what inherency, how it maintains inertia, and how it affects policy analysis.
 - a. Students will be able to identify facets of inherency and how they relate to each other.
3. Students will understand the differences between saliency and intensity and know how to apply it to current events.
4. Students will observe the differences between agenda setting and problem definition and begin thinking of how to apply it to their upcoming policy.

Agenda

1. Review of the Policy Cycle (10 min)
2. Defining the Problem (15 min)
 - a. What is Inherency?
3. Saliency and intensity

Revised July 2017

Topics

Topic 1 - Defining the Problem

Resources:

1. *President Obama On the Passage of Health Reform* [Video file]. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GALYnnAQFKA>
2. *Sen. McConnell on health care (C-SPAN)* [Video file]. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nwcHc6Ax7BI>
3. Kraft, M. E., & Furlong, S. R. (2018). *Public policy: Politics, analysis, and alternatives*. Thousand Oaks, CA: CQ Press, an imprint of SAGE Publications.

CORE Crash Course (CCC):

The main point about this topic is that you can define a problem in a way to change what the main issue is. Look at Mitch McConnell, who framed the issue of healthcare in terms of cost. “We have one of the most expensive healthcare systems in the world, and Obama added to that” he said. Obama turned around and talked about how there are still many uninsured people in the U.S., and that Obamacare still needs to be put in place. Both have the same goal of giving healthcare to the U.S., but have different ways of going about it.

Topic 2 - Inherency

Resources:

1. <http://homeschooldebate.com/wiki/index.php?title=Inherency>

CORE Crash Course (CCC):

Inherency is simply why a specific problem hasn’t been solved given that there are competent people aware of the problem. It encompasses the current status quo, issues with public opinion, etc. It’s the reason harm, or a bad impact of an issue, is being prevented from being fixed.

- Structural Inherency
 - A law, rule, or fact of life is the cause of harm that the discussion is focusing on
- Gap Inherency
 - While the problem and its cause has been recognized, not enough has been done to adequately address it.
- Attitudinal Inherency
 - The barrier to people solving the problem exists within their attitudes: their perception towards the problem is what is causing the problem to exist

Topic 3 - Agenda Setting

Resources:

1. <http://profwork.org/pp/agenda/set.html>

CORE Crash Course (CCC):

Agenda Setting is essentially identifying problems that require government attention and deciding which issues deserve the most attention.

- Intensity
 - The scale of how people feel on a certain issue - to what degree an individual likes or dislikes something
- Saliency
 - How important an issue actually is to someone

Sources

1. **Political Compass Test**
 - a. <https://www.politicalcompass.org/test>
2. **Democrats in the House of Representatives protest a moment of silence in memory of those killed in the massacre in Orlando in June:**
 - a. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=orDhE_GsL2k
3. **Global Grand Challenges**
 - a. <http://singularityu.org/global-grand-challengest/>
4. **Inherency**
 - a. <https://debate.uvm.edu/NFL/rostrumlib/cxBates10102.pdf>